

BOSTON HERALD.

MONDAY, MARCH 6, 1882.

WILDE AND SWING.

The Poet's Reply to the Pastor's Criticisms.

[Special Dispatch to the Herald.]

CHICAGO, Ill., March 5, 1882. Oscar Wilde was smoking a cigarette when your correspondent saw him this afternoon in a Grand Pacific Hotel parlor. He wore a dove-colored sack coat of velvet, trimmed with drab silk braid, vest to match, pantaloons of light-colored Scotch tweed, shoes of patent leather and very pointed at the toe, neck dress of brilliant red and pocket handkerchief to match. "I am fond of sweet odors, I love perfumery passionately," he remarked as he paid a boy \$4 who came into the room bearing six pint bottles of perfumery. Dictating in a deliberate, distinct utterance, he spoke as follows regarding the recent attack upon him in the Alliance: "Knowing of Prof. Swing as a brilliant man, I had hoped that his attack upon me would at least be brilliant; for, next to having a loyal friend, there is for me no pleasure like that to be found in having an intelligent enemy; simply because one can answer him. I was very much disappointed when I read it; for if a man has anything to say against the clothes I wear he should write to my tailor; and if he cares to speak unfavorably of flowers, which I think beautiful, he should address himself to my gardener; and, as regards his solemn attack upon me for receiving fees for the trouble of lecturing, nothing could, of course, be more foolish, coming from a practical man of the world, such as Prof. Swing is said to be. Every man should be paid for the work he does. The bitter reproach which comes from the clergy to me has a grotesque side, when one considers that it comes from a body of men who receive large salaries for preaching the beauty of voluntary poverty. As regards his statement that I omit to take account of the moral element in art, as I feel sure that he is too honest a man to try to misrepresent me, I can only conclude that he neither attended nor read my lecture. Had he done so, he would have seen that I divided it into two parts. In the first part I said that the moral elements were necessary for good workmanship; that the ordinary workman worked with his hands and his heart, if the work has any beauty at all, and that all good art rests on two things—truth and honesty; that work dishonestly done, or which pretended to be something else than what it really was, such as the painting of wood to represent marble, or the staining of paper to represent stone, was all dead, bad art, quite worthless and very ugly. There is no better school for anybody than is to be found in work in art, for, while in the world about us the cheat and the liar may often go unpunished for a long time, if a man does untruthful work in art, he knows that he is bringing upon himself his own punishment, that he will be found out and won't last. In the second part I dwelt on the effect that art would have on ordinary men and women who do not work in art, but merely enjoy it. I showed what its influence might be on children and that it might have on nations. Now, as regards children, it would teach them to love the beautiful and the good and hate the evil and the ugly quite naturally and simply, the lesson coming to them so unconsciously and in such a joyous way that they would never forget it. As regards the nation, I advance the thought that art, by producing a common intellectual atmosphere, might be laying a sure basis for some universal brotherhood of man and a humanity which would include all patriotism, and I reminded the audience how Goethe had felt this and how he had no surer lesson to show one than that national hatreds are always strongest where civilization is lowest. I am very much surprised that any one bearing the name of David should be fighting on the side of the Philistines. Rather should he be the first to take the pebble from the river brook and hurl it at that monstrous Goliath of Chicago architecture, the water tower, instead of calling it a calm and rational building—two most unfortunate epithets. But perhaps I am wrong in taking the learned professor so seriously to task, for of what I have read in American literature the sermons of your divines always seem to be humorous, and the writings of your humorists most depressing."